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Energy Sense: Energy Conservation for Young People

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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FS 741

ENERGY SENSE:

young people

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture

ENERGY SENSE

energy conservation for young people

What Is Energy?

Energy is the ability to do work; it produces power, heat, and light. In order to function—from vigorous exercise to sleeping—the human body needs energy. Humans get energy by eating nourishing foods. Machines also need energy to move and to do useful work. Most machines get power by using energy from fossil fuels: coal, natural gas, and oil.

Why Conserve Energy?

Fossil fuels are found in very large but limited amounts under the surface of the earth where, millions of years ago, they were formed from decaying plants and animals. Once used, fossil fuels cannot be replaced. Fossil fuels are used to make electricity, to heat and cool homes and businesses, to operate factories, and for transportation. In the United States, the average person uses 25 times more energy from fossil fuels than is used by a person in a less industrialized country of the world.

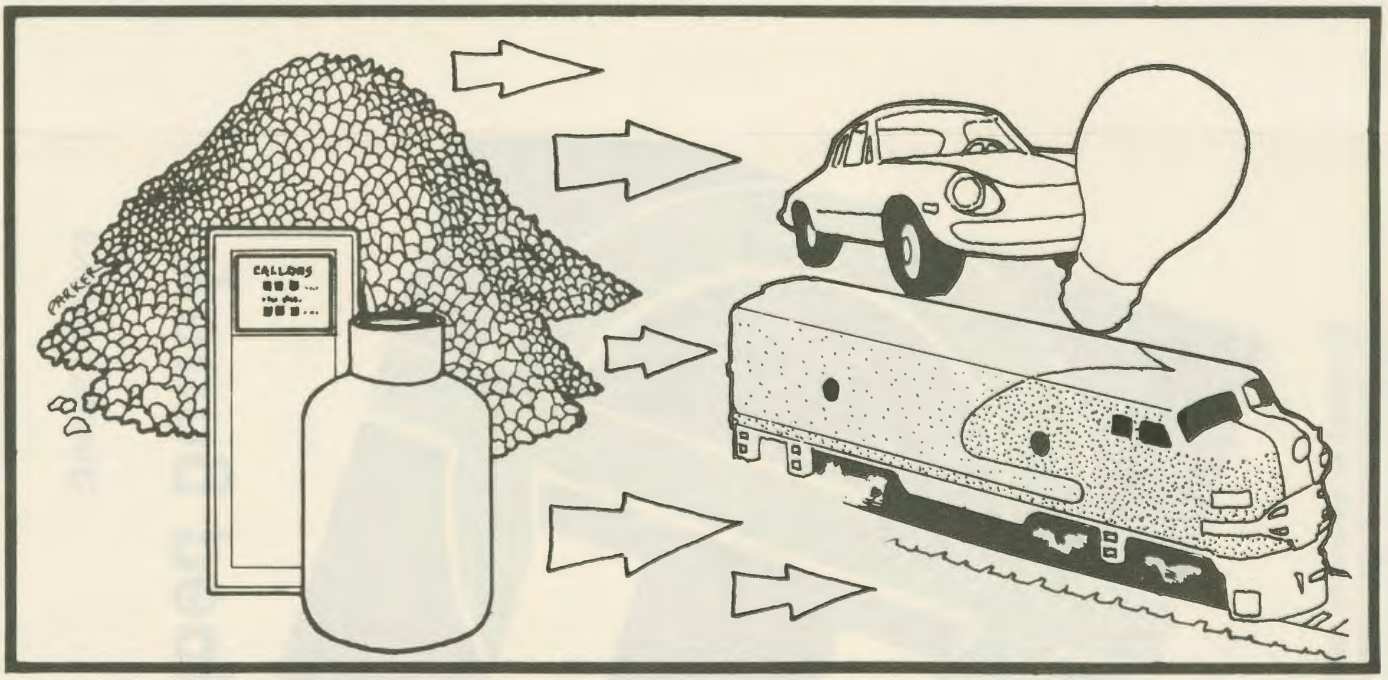
Scientists are learning how to harness energy that can be replaced. They have found ways to use energy from the wind, tides, the atom, heat from the earth, and the sun. But until scientists learn how to make these sources of energy safe, dependable, and economical, we must conserve our present energy supplies.

It takes only a few ounces of oil or coal to make enough electricity for a 100-watt light bulb to burn for about an hour or to heat a gallon of water to about 160°F. That's not very much oil or coal. But consider all the hot water and electric lights used in your home; think of **all** the energy used in your home. Then consider how much oil and electricity must be used on your block, in your town or city, in all of the United States. Ounces quickly become barrels and tons, millions of them! If you, your family and neighbors, indeed, all of the people in this country, used less energy from fossil fuels, we could stretch fossil fuel supplies until other sources of energy are ready to use.

How Can You Help?

- Walking, hiking, jogging, and bicycling depend on no energy except yours. Learn how to entertain yourself and how to get from place to place without depending on fossil fuels. If you now become independent of fossil fuels, you will be more apt to continue that way as you grow older. Remember, we must save energy!

- Become the "energy miser" in your family. (That means, don't use energy unless you have to.) You can become an energy miser by following the preceding suggestions as well as the following tips.



• Turn off the television, radio, and record player when no one is watching or listening. When looking for entertainment, read a book instead of turning on the television. (Electric lights use less energy than televisions.)

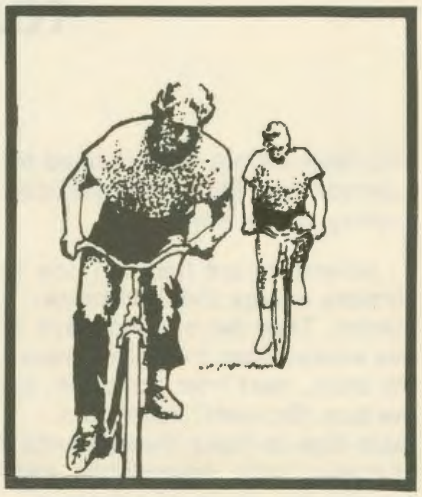
• Don't turn on more lights than you need in a room, and turn them off when you leave.

• Don't hold open an outside door. Go in and out of a building quickly, and close the door behind you. It takes a lot of energy to heat or cool a building.

• Don't let water run when you do the dishes or wash your hair, and turn off all water faucets completely; an open or dripping faucet wastes energy.

• Instead of baths, take quick showers; they use up to 50 percent less hot water.

• Decide what you want from the refrigerator **before** you open the door. Try to open the door only once to get what you need, and do that quickly. Warm air enters the refrigerator and raises the temperature when the door is held open. The refrigerator then uses energy to return the temperature to a cool level.



• On sunny winter days, open window blinds, shades, and curtains so the sun's heat will help warm your home. Close window coverings in the evening to keep heat in a room.

• Walk or bike to school if it's nearby instead of asking someone to drive you. When you and your friends plan an outing that involves rides, organize a car pool among families so that fewer cars are needed. Cars use energy.

• Look for ways to save energy in your home. If you find energy being wasted, offer to help your parents correct the situation.

• Let your friends know how and why you're saving energy. Encourage them to become energy misers.

• Teach younger children the "whys" and "hows" of energy conservation.

• Sun and wind affect the amount of energy used to heat and cool a home. Properly selected and planted trees and shrubs can reduce heating and cooling needs. When it's gift-giving time, ask for or give a tree as a present.

• Ask in school if your class can study energy conservation. If your class comes up with some good ideas or projects, perhaps you could put on an "energy" assembly for the whole school.

• Encourage your 4-H club or scout troop to conduct home and community energy conservation projects.

One in a series of home energy conservation fact sheets. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the USDA. Hollis D. Hall, Director of CES, SDSU, Brookings. Educational programs offered without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, handicap, or national orgin. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

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